

Fires Brigade Medics sustain the Force

By Capt. Jim Silverstrim
Medical Plans Officer

What could I do but go with them [soldiers of the Civil War], or work for them and my country? The patriot blood of my father was warm in my veins.

Clara Barton

The Army is steeped in medical tradition from the Revolutionary War to the present. Over the course of our country's history, peacetime and wartime medical innovations have made today's Army the most advanced medical lifesaving service in the world.

At the core of the medical community is the combat medic. Combat medics have been selflessly serving their country in all of our countries wars, and the medics of the Fires Brigade proudly follow in their footsteps.

The 2nd Battalion, 20th Field Artillery medical platoon has been very busy in the last month. The platoon, with a total of eleven medics spread over three bases, has an abundance of work to share.

At Camp Wolf, Pfc. Joshua Kelly was promoted to specialist. He and Sgt. Charles Egerstrom have been supporting their battery on daily patrols and convoys. Besides providing the only medical coverage on the base, these two medics have also found time to teach and certify three combat life savers.

The rain from February and March left many areas of standing water in and around Camp Wolf. Egerstrom and Kelly organized preventive medicine measures to treat the standing water for insects.

Two other 2-20 FA medics, Spcs. Chris Santomo and Russell Dragon, have been supporting a 2-20 FA platoon at Forward Operating Base Remagen. Santomo and Dragon have been working out of the 3rd Battalion, 320th Field Artillery's battalion aid station. They have been providing medical coverage, convoy support, and participate in battalion training.

The remaining seven medics: Staff Sgt. Roland Walker, Sgt. Gregory Gutierrez, Spc. Bobby Warden, Spc. Marc Mangino, Spc. Kevin Jerrell, Spc. Reginald Lockett, and Spc. Sarah Hess), the physician assistant, Capt. Cleve Sylvester, and the medical platoon leader, 2nd Lt. Wes Ket, have all been supporting the efforts of the 2-20 FA headquarters at FOB Q-West.

The medical section at FOB Q-West finally procured a building for a Battalion Aid Station at the end of February. Much of the month of March was spent organizing and improving the new BAS.

The end of March brought five separate ranges that were all supported by the medics.

Aside from providing medical coverage for the battalion, the medics conducted a combat life saver course where 15 soldiers were trained and certified.

The medics continue to improve their own skills, as well. Sylvester gives daily trauma classes to his medics to keep their medical skills sharp.

The coming months promise to be just as busy for the 2-20 FA medical section with more combat life saver courses scheduled and more tactical missions to support.

The Headquarters medical platoon has also been very busy. Training for the Expert Field Medical Badge is in full gear.

Over the last month, our medics have trained on several of the testing areas for the EFMB. Training focused on communications, emergency medical treatment, medical evacuation, and land navigation.

Special thanks go to Sgt. Patricia Matos, who ran the communications training even though she doesn't work in our section.

The other classes were taught by our own medics. Staff Sgt. Chris Parks taught land navigation and Spc. Patrie Campbell-Sobish was the primary instructor for evacuation training.

All training areas will be taught continuously while we're deployed and after we return.

In addition, the medics continue to provide support for training and additional missions in the brigade. We provided range coverage in the last month as well as medical support to ongoing transportation missions.

Our headquarters' physician, Dr. Mark Roschewski, redeployed back to the States. He was selected to attend fellowship training at Walter Reed Medical Center. We will miss him greatly. He was a tremendous asset to the brigade and was well liked by his platoon.

Lt. Col. Jon Allison, an internist from Fort Lewis, Wash., arrived last week to take Roschewski's place and is a welcome addition to the headquarters team.

Lastly, Pfc. Jeff Legere, who was promoted to specialist at the beginning of April. He looks forward to the increased responsibility associated with his new rank.

Thanks again for all your support. Please keep writing and we'll do our best to write back. I look forward to updating you on all the great things our medics are doing here next month. Until then, take care and God Bless.